A

DISCOURSE

ABOUT

Edification:

IN

ANSWER

TO A

QUESTION,

Whether it is Lawful for any Man to forsake the Communion of the *Church of England*, and go to the *Separate Meetings*, because he can better Edifie there?

By Gregory Hascard, dean of Windsor

The Second EDITION.

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A DISCOURSE About EDIFICATION:

In Answer to a *Question*,

WHether it is lawful for any Man to forsake the Communion of the Church of England, *and go to the separate Meetings, because he can better Edifie there?*

Answer, It is Unlawful.

To make this plain, two things must be consider'd:

First, What sort of Person this is, who asks this Question.

Secondly, What he means by Edification.

As to the Perſon, he is ſuppos'd to be one, that is fully ſatisfied, that he may lawfully Communicate with the Church of *England*; That there are no Terms of Communion put upon him, but which he can comply withal with a good Conſcience; That there is nothing in it contrary to the Word of God, natural Reaſon, or plain Conſequences fetcht from both or either. And therefore he who thinks, that there are ſome things unlawful in the Communion of the Church of *England*, is not concern'd in the Queſtion; for he ſeparates upon the Account of Unlawfulneſs, and not Edification onely, as is ſuppos'd in the Queſtion.

Secondly, By Edification is meant, an Improvement of his Spiritual Condition in the full latitude, wherein-ſoever it may truly conſiſt; whether in the Articles of his Faith, which in the ſeparate Congregations are better taught, more clearly prov'd, more fitly appli'd to his practice, and to ſupport his hopes of Heaven; or whether in the Rules of Life, which are there more exactly laid down, and more ſtrongly enforc'd upon his Mind; or in Prayers, which among them are better compos'd, and more fervently ſent up unto God; and in all other parts of Devotion, which there are better fram'd and order'd to affect his Soul, and make a truly Chriſtian man.

Theſe two things being explain'd, and premis'd, the Anſwer to the Queſtion will be found true, if we conſider the following Reaſons:

1. That the Ground upon which the Queſtion ſtands is falſe, *viz.* There is not better Edification to be had in the Separate Meetings, than in the Communion of the Church of *England*.

This will appear, if we conſider,

1. How apt and fit the whole Conſtitution of the Church

Church of *England* is to Edifie Mens Souls.

2. That this Conſtitution is well us'd and manag'd, by the Paſtors of our Church, for Edification.

The firſt will be manifeſt by Induction, if we conſider the ſeveral parts of her Conſtitution, reducible to theſe following Heads:

1. Her Creeds or Articles of Faith are thoſe which our Diſſenters themſelves allow; which are full and plain, containing all Neceſſaries and Fundamentals in Religion; nothing defective in Vitals or Integrals, to make up the Body of a true Chriſtian Church. Chriſt that founded his Church, beſt knew what was abſolutely neceſſary to her being; and there is nothing that he hath declar'd to be ſo, but is contain'd in her Creeds. Whatever is fundamental for us to know of the Nature of God, is to be found there, or by eaſie Conſequences deduced from them. Would we know what we ought to believe of the Nature of Chriſt or his Offices, the Deſigns of his coming upon Earth, the Conſtitution of his Reign and Government, the Rewards and Puniſhments of his Laws, the Times of Account and Retribution, the mighty Miracles and extraordinary Acts of Providence to confirm theſe; we may read them at large in Holy Writ, and find wiſely ſumm'd up in our Creeds. Whoſe Articles, to help the Memories of Men, are ſhort and few; and to aſſiſt the dulneſs of their Underſtandings, are manifeſt and plain; they containing no more, than what was ſome way or other, either ſuppos'd before, or included in, or following from that brief Creed, *the Character of a true Chriſtian*, that *Jeſus is the Chriſt, the Son of God.* 1 John 4. 15. 5. 5. Whatever is any way reveal'd by God as neceſſary, is an Article of our Faith: nothing that is nice and obſcure, fit onely for diſpute and wrangling, is brought into

into our Creed; all whose Articles are Primitive, and of Divine right; none of them purely speculative or curious, but plain and useful in order to practice, naturally leading to an Holy Life, the end of all Religion. We love every thing that is truly ancient and Apostolical, but we cannot call that an eternal truth, which was but yesterday; and we are ready to embrace all truth, but we cannot call that the High-Priest, which is but the Fringe of his Garment. We believe all that the early Christians in the first 300 Years thought sufficient for them to know (and they were very secure that this would save them.) And if any truth be disguis'd or defac'd by the iniquity of the descending Ages, we are ready to receive it, whenever it is made clear, and restor'd to its former shape and complexion; we casting out obstinacy and perverseness out of our Practice, as well as niceness out of our Creed. That Creed that Christ and his Apostles taught, the Saints, Martyrs, and Confessors, the Wise and Good Men in the first and purest days of Christianity believ'd, and were secure of Heaven by it, and therefore added no more; that Faith this Church maintains, which will sufficiently and effectually Edifie the Souls of Men.

2. The Necessity she lays upon a Good Life and Works. For this is the solemn intention of all Religion, our Creed, our Prayers, our Sacraments, and Discipline, and all Devotion. Her Creed is such, that all its Articles so directly, or by natural consequence, lead unto Virtue and Holiness, that no man can firmly believe them, but they must ordinarily influence his Manners, and better his Conversation; and if by virtue of his Creed his Life is not mended, he either ignorantly and grosly mistakes their Consequences, or is wilfully desperate. Our Church publickly declares, that

that without preparatory Virtues, no Acts of Devotion, however set off with Zeal and Passion, are pleasing unto God; and if obedience be wanting afterwards, are but scene and show. Such a Faith she lays down as fundamental to salvation, which rests not in the brain and story, in magnifying and praising, in sighing and repeating, but in the production of Mercy, Charity, and Justice, and such excellent Virtues. She makes no debates between Faith and Good Works, nor argues nicely about the preference, nor disputes critically the Mode how joyntly they become the condition of Salvation; but plainly determines, that without Faith and Good Works, no Man shall see God. She not onely keeps to a Form of sound Words, but to a Conversation of equal Firmness and Solidity. Her Festivals are to commemorate the Virtues of Excellent Men, and to recommend them as Presidents for imitation. Her Ceremonies, which were principally design'd for Decency, may also remind us of those Virtues which become the *Worshippers of God.* Her Collects and Petitions are for Grace to subdue our Follies, and to fortifie our resolutions for Holiness. Her discipline is to lash the sturdy into Sobriety and Goodness; And her Homilies are plainly and smartly to declare against the gross Acts of Impiety, and to perswade a true Christian Deportment in Word and Deed; and her whole Constitution aims at the Design of the Gospel, to teach Men to live *Soberly, Righteously, and Godly.* She flatters and lulls no man asleep in Vice, but tells all secure sinners plainly, that they do not pray nor receive aright, that they are not absolv'd, that their persons are not justified, nor can have any true hopes of Heaven, except they purifie themselves, and be really just and good. She neither useth nor allows any nice distinctions in plain Duties, to baffle our Obedience; nor

suffers

ſuffers a cunning head to ſerve the deſigns of a wicked heart, and teach Men learnedly to ſin; but urgeth plain Virtues laid down diſtinctly in Holy Writ, and taught by Natural Reaſon and Conſcience (without calling them mean Duties, or ordinary Morality) to be the great Ornament of our Religion, and the Soul of our Faith. She ſets no abſtruſe and phantaſtick Characters, nor any Marks, whoſe truth muſt be ſetcht in by long deductions and conſequences, for Men to judge by, whether they ſhall be ſav'd or no; but Faith and good Works, which the Philoſopher and meaneſt Chriſtian can eaſily judge of. The civil intereſt of a Nation is Edifi'd by ſuch a Church, preſſing the neceſſity of good Works; not onely thereby enforcing Peace and Juſtice, Pity and Tenderneſs, Humility and Kindneſs, one towards another; but ſhe makes Kings ſafer, and Subjects more ſecure, condemning both Tyranny and Diſobedience; Parents more obey'd, and Subjects more lov'd, commanding equally Bowels and Affections, and Duty and Honour; Maſters and Servants, Husbands and Wives, and all Relations, are kept in their juſt Bounds and Priviledges. With other Churches, we make good Works neceſſary to Salvation, but think our ſelves more modeſt and ſecure in taking away Arrogance and Merit, and advancing the Grace of Chriſt: With other Men, we cry up Faith, but not an hungry and a ſtarved one, but what is fruitful of good Works; and ſo have all that others contend for, with greater modeſty and ſecurity.

3. How fitly this Church is conſtituted to excite true Devotion. When we make our Addreſſes unto God, we ought to have worthy and reverend Conceptions of his Nature, a true ſenſe and plain knowledge of the Duty, and of the Wants and Neceſſities for which we pray to be ſupply'd. All which our Church,

to

to help our Devotion, plainly ſets down, deſcribing God by all his Attributes of juſt, wiſe, and laying forth the Vices and Infirmities of Humane Nature, and that none elſe but God can cure our needs. When her Sons are to pray, the matter of her Petitions are not nice and controverted, trivial, or words of a Party; but plain and ſubſtantial, wherein all agree. Her Words in Prayer are neither ruſtick nor gay, the whole Compoſure neither too tedious nor too ſhort; decently order'd to help our Memories and wandring Thoughts. Reſponſals and ſhort Collects in Publick Devotion are ſo far from being her fault, that they are her beauty and prudence. There are few Caſes and Conditions of Humane Life, whether of a Civil or Spiritual Nature, which have not their proper Prayers and particular Petitions for them, at leaſt as is proper for publick Devotions. When we return our Thanks, we have proper Offices to enflame our Paſſions, to quicken our Reſentment, to excite our Love, and to confirm our future Obedience, the beſt inſtance of gratitude. When we Commemorate the Paſſion of Chriſt, we have a Service fit to move our Affections, to aſſiſt our Faith, to enlarge our Charity, to ſhew forth and exhibit Chriſt and all his bloudy Sufferings, every way to qualifie us to diſcharge that great Duty. She hath indeed nothing to kindle an Enthuſiaſtick heat, nor any thing that ſavours of Raptures and Extaſies, which commonly flow from temper or fraud; but that which makes us manly devout, our Judgment ſtill guiding our Affections. When we enter firſt into Religion, and go out of the World, we have two proper Offices, Baptiſm, and Burial, full of Devotion, to attend thoſe purpoſes. So that if any doth not pray, and give thanks, communicate, and live like a Chriſtian, 'tis not becauſe the Services to promote theſe are too plain, and

hungry, beggarly and mean, but their own mind is not fitly qualifi'd before they uſe them: bring but an honeſt mind to theſe parts of Devotion, a true ſenſe of God, ſober and good purpoſes, and affections well diſpoſed, that which is plain will prove Seraphical, improve our Judgment, heighten our Paſſions, and make the Church a Quire of Angels. Without which good diſpoſition, our Devotion is but Conſtitution, or melancholy Peeviſhneſs, Sullenneſs, or Devotion to a Party, a Sacrifice that God will not acccept.

4. Her Order and Diſcipline. Such are the Capacities and Manners of Men, not to be taught onely by naked Vertue, a natural Judgment, or an immediate Teaching of God; but by Miniſtry and Diſcipline, decent Ceremonies and Conſtitutions, and other external Methods: theſe are the outward Pales and Guards, the Supplies and Helps for the Weakneſs of Humane Nature. Our Church hath fitted and ordered theſe ſo well, as neither to want or to abound; not to make Religion too gay, nor leave her ſlovingly; neither rude nor phantaſtick, but is cloth'd in Dreſſes proper to a manly Religion; not to pleaſe or gratifie our ſenſes, ſo as to fix there, but to ſerve the reaſon and judgment of our Mind. There are none of our Ceremonies, which good Men, and wiſe Men, have not judged decent, and ſerviceable to the great ends of Religion; and none of them but derive themſelves from a very ancient Family, being us'd in moſt Ages, and moſt of the Churches of God; and have decency, antiquity, and uſefulneſs, to plead for them; to help our Memories, to excite our Affections, to render our Services orderly and comely. Were we indeed all Soul, and ſuch Seraphical Saints, and grown Men, as we make our ſelves, we might then plead againſt ſuch external helps; but when we have Natures of weakneſs

and

and paſſion, theſe outward helps may be call'd very convenient, if not generally neceſſary: and as our Nature is mixt of Soul and Body, ſo muſt always our Devotion be here; and ſuch God expects, and is pleas'd with. Our Church is neither defective in Power and Diſcipline (had ſhe her juſt dues; and others would do well to joyn with her in her wiſhes, that they might be reſtor'd) which would turn all into Confuſion; nor yet tyrannical, want of Authority breeding as many, if not more Miſeries than Tyranny, or too much Power; both of them ſevere Curſes of a Nation. But her Government, like her Clime, is ſo well temper'd together, that the Members of this Chriſtian Society may not be diſſolute or rude with her, nor her Rulers inſolent; being conſtituted in the Church with their different Names and Titles, not for luſtre and greatneſs, and Secular purpoſes, but for ſuppreſſion of Vice, the maintaining of Faith, Peace, Order, and all Virtues, the true Edification of Mens Souls. And if thoſe Vices are not reprov'd and chaſtized, which fall under her Cognizance, 'tis not the fault of her Power, but becauſe by other ways ill reſtrain'd; unneceſſary Diviſions from her, hindring her Diſcipline upon Offenders, and ſo they hinder that Edification which thy contend for. This Government is not Modern, Particular, or purely Humane, but Apoſtolical, Primitive, and Univerſal, to time as well as place: till ſome private Perſons, for Number, Learning, or Piety, not to be equall'd to the good Men of old, who defended it, and obey'd it, and ſuffer'd for it, out of ſome miſtakes of Humane frailty and paſſion, or born down with the iniquities of the times, began to change it, and declaim againſt it, though ſo very fit and proper to promote Chriſtianity in the World. This is a general account of that Edifi-

cation that is to be had in that Church in which we live; a more particular one would be too long for this Diſcourſe: but thus much muſt be ſaid, that examine all her particular Parts, and Offices, you will find none of them light, or ſuperſtitious, novel, or too numerous, ill diſpos'd, or uncouth, improper or burthenſome, no juſt cauſe for any to revolt from her Communion: but conſidering the preſent circumſtances of Chriſtianity, and Men, *the beſt conſtituted Church in the World. If therefore Edification be going on to Perfection, or growing in Grace; if it is doing good to the Souls of Men; if it be to make plain the great things in Religion to the underſtandings of Men*; or whatever the import of it is, in relation to Faith or Virtue, which is the condition of our Salvation, it is to be found in this Church; whoſe Conſtitution is apt and fit to do all this: And St. *Jude* ſeems to tell us, that true Edification was a ſtranger to thoſe who ſeparated from the common building; but *thoſe who kept to the Communion of the* Church, *built up themſelves in their moſt holy Faith, and pray'd in the Holy Ghoſt*. And the honeſt Chriſtian, with greater aſſurance, may expect the Grace and Bleſſings of Chriſt, and the Divine Spirit, whoſe Promiſes are made to them, who continue in the Communion of the Church, and not to them who divide from the Body, and have greater hopes of Edification from their Teacher, than the Grace of God, from *Apollos*, that waters, than from Chriſt, the chief Husbandman, who gives the encreaſe.

Heb. 6. 1. 2 Pet. 3. 18. Rom. 15. 2. 1 Cor. 14. 3.

Verſ. 19.

2. This Conſtitution is us'd and manag'd in the beſt way, by the Paſtours of our Church, to Edifie the Souls of Men. This will appear, if we conſider theſe two things:

1. That

1. That there are ſtrict Commands under great Penalties laid upon the Paſtours of our Church to do this; who are not left to their own freedom, and private judgment, or the force onely of common Chriſtianity upon them, thus to improve Mens Souls committed to their charge; but have Temporal Mulcts and Eccleſiaſtical Cenſures held over them, to keep them to their Duty. That when they do inform or direct their Flocks about their Belief, they ſhould keep to the Analogy of Faith, or Form of ſound Words. Or when they perſwade to practice, their Rules and Propoſitions muſt be according to Godlineſs. That whenever they Exhort or Rebuke, Preach or Pray; whenever they Direct, or Anſwer the Scruples of Mens Minds, in the whole Exerciſe and Compaſs of their Miniſtry, they are to have an Eye to the Creed; to regard Mercy and Juſtice, the Standard of good Manners; in ſhort, to preſerve Faith and a good Conſcience with ſubſtantial Devotion; which will to the purpoſe Edifie Mens Souls, and effectually ſave them.

2. That theſe Commands are obey'd by the Paſtours of our Church, and they do all things in it to Edification. For the truth of this, we appeal to good Men, and wiſe Men, in the Communion of our Church, who have Honeſty and Judgment to confeſs this truth, and with gratitude acknowledge, that the Paſtours of the Church of *England* have led them into the ways of Truth and Righteouſneſs, cured their Ignorance, and reform'd their Lives, and upon good grounds given them an aſſurance of Heaven. To ſay ſuch as theſe are prejudic'd, and want ſincerity and knowledge to paſs a judgment, is onely to prove, what we juſtly ſuſpect, that they want true Edification among themſelves, and ſhould be better taught the Doctrine of Charity.

Charity. Our *Proteſtant* Neighbours, impartial Judges, will give their Teſtimony to this Truth, who have own'd and commended the Government of this Church, condemn'd the Separation, magnifi'd the Prudence, Piety, and Works of her Governours and Paſtours, and wiſh'd, that they and their charge were under ſuch a Diſcipline; and tranſlated many of their Pious and Learned Works, to Edifie and Save their People. Our diſſenting Brethren themſelves (at leaſt in the good Mood, and out of the heat of Diſpute) give their conſent to this, that the Inſtructions and Diſcourſes of our Paſtours from their Pulpits, are Solid, Learned, Affectionate, and Pious; and their only Crime was, that ſometimes they were too well ſtudied, and too good. If in the great number of the *Engliſh* Clergy, ſome few may be lazy, one particular perſon may clothe his Doctrine in too gay a dreſs, another talks Scholaſtically above the capacity of his hearers, a third too dully, a fourth too nicely, and opinionatively, and here and there a Paſtour anſwers not the true deſign of Preaching, to inform mens Minds, to guide their Conſciences, and move their Affections; what is this to the general Charge, That no Edification ſo good is to be had, as in the ſeparate Meetings, the pretended Cauſe of their Separation? For 'tis no more a true Cauſe, than want of Accommodation or Room in Churches, for ſome to ſeparate, where good Edification and Conveniency too may be eaſily had. And ſince they compel our Paſtours to ſpeak well of themſelves, by their detraction and ſpeaking ill of them, they muſt *gladly ſuffer them as fools*, boldly to ſay, That ſince the Reformation, and many hundred years before, there hath not been a Clergy, ſo Learned and Pious, ſo Prudent and Painful, and every way induſtrious to Edifie and ſave the Souls of Men, as now is in the *Engliſh* Church.

The Unreaſonableneſs of Separation, *p.* 117.

2 Cor. 11. 19.

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The Second Argument to confirm the Anſwer, is, That thoſe that uſually make this pretence for Separation, do commonly miſtake better Edification. We have prov'd already, that good and ſufficient Edification, to ſave the Souls of Men, is to be had in the *Engliſh* Church. For if teaching plainly the Articles of Faith, and laying down clearly Rules of Manners, uſing well-compoſed Prayers, and proper Adminiſtration of Sacraments, be not good, and ſufficient Edification, I know not what Edification means: it may be heating of fancy, ſtirring up of humours, this, or that; and Men may as well define the thing they call Wit, as what Edification means. And therefore to deſert the plain and great Duty of our Church-Communion, for diſputable, doubtful, or truly miſtaken Edification, is to be guilty of the ſin of Schiſm. In moſt caſes, to judge what is better or beſt, is very hard, and requires a ſincere and conſidering head; and ſo it is in the buſineſs of better Edification, which is ſo eaſily miſtaken, eſpecially by the generality of the People, who are uſually ignorant of ſuch nice things, and prejudic'd by their Parties and Affections, and are *mutable and various, according to their fancies. For better Edification, purer Adminiſtrations and Churches, and things that are more excellent, abſolute Perfection, and a leſs defective Way of Worſhip*, are hard to underſtand, perplex mens minds, and fill them with innumerable doubts and ſcruples, and put them upon refining and purging ſo long, till they weaken and deſtroy the Spirit of Religion. And ſo they run themſelves into a known ſin, for dark and diſputable advantages; which indeed are only miſtakes, and principally are theſe three that follow:

1. In

1. In taking nice and ſpeculative Notions, for great and Edifying Truths. When Doctrines have been rais'd, only to pleaſe the temper of the curious and inquiſitive; yet have made many think, their hearts were warm'd, when their heads and fancies were gratifi'd. And dark and obſcure Diſcourſes about Angels, the ſtate of ſepa-
Coloſ. 2. 18 rated Souls, and things of the like nature, have made ſome call the Preacher high and myſterious; while others, teaching the way of Salvation plainly, by Faith and a good Converſation, have been leſſen'd, with the character of dull, honeſt, and moral Men, fit onely for Catechiſts, and Chriſtians of the loweſt Form. Tickle but their imaginations with conjectural Diſcourſes about the Situation of Paradiſe of old, or Hell now, and you are a ſounder Divine, than he, that onely draws wholſom Concluſions from *Adam*'s prevarication, to caution you againſt ſin of the like nature, or how to avoid thoſe diſmal flames where ever they are. And others have been ſilly and phantaſtick in admiring thoſe who have pratled about the length of the Sword that guarded Paradiſe, or how the Spirits above paſs Eternity away, and ſcorn'd him, who in plain methods chalkt them out the way that will lead
1 Tim. 1. 4. them to Heaven. The ancient *Gnoſticks*, becauſe they made a mixture of the *Jewiſh* Fables and Genealogies, of their *Lilith* and *Behemoth*, and fetcht in the Stories of the Gods, out of *Orpheus* and *Philiſtion*, (two great Divines in the *Pagan* Religion) into plain Chriſtianity, thought themſelves the moſt knowing Men, of the Secrets of God and Heaven; and wondred how onely Faith upon Jeſus, and keeping of the Commands, could be knowing of God, or Wiſdom from above. The wranglings of the Schools, with their fine diſtinctions and barbarous terms, fitter for Magick than Chriſtianity, by their Diſciples have been priz'd for great

great and precious Truths. And Enthuſiaſtick Raptures, and ſlights, making once the Brain to ſwim, have ſnatcht the hearers beyond themſelves, and then thought them the Dictates of the Spirit, and the Teachings of God; and the more dark and obſcure the Doctrine hath been, the greater illumination it was eſteem'd, and call'd a noon-day Thought, which was a mid-night Dream. Such things as theſe paſs with too many, for ſaving Truths; a great part of Mankind, being ignorant in their Heads, and corrupt in their Practice, eſpous'd to Parties and Intereſts, having Conſtitutions and Paſſions fit for theſe, they readily ſwallow them down. The Apoſtle *confirms the truth of this, telling us, the time will come, when they will not endure ſound Doctrine, but after their own luſts, ſhall they heap to themſelves Teachers, having itching Ears*, caus'd by ſome diſeaſe of Vice within, which is not to be cured by good Phyſick, but onely ſcratch'd and gratifi'd; and if the Food, though wholſom and good, be not to their Palate and Fancy, they complain of hunger and ſtarving. 2 Tim. 4. 3.

Theſe and many more are the Inſtances of a weak and ſickly nature, craving onely nice and curious things for Spiritual Meat, and kecking at the ſincere Milk of the Word, plain and ſubſtantial Truths, that it may grow thereby. To give therefore a liberty to every Man to run from an eſtabliſhed Church, upon the account of better Edification, which is ſo often and eaſily miſtaken, is to direct Men into temptation and a ſnare, and is dangerous and ſinful; and when once the gap is open, where will, eſpecially the Vulgar, ſtop? May we not add, that this pretence of better Edification is very fit to diſguiſe and colour other Vices? When Controverſies have unhappily riſen, from an unjuſt denial of the Miniſters Rights and

1. In taking nice and ſpeculative Notions, for great and Edifying Truths. When Doctrines have been rais'd, only to pleaſe the temper of the curious and inquiſitive; yet have made many think, their hearts were warm'd, when their heads and fancies were gratifi'd. And dark and obſcure Diſcourſes about Angels, the ſtate of ſepa-
Coloſ.2.18 rated Souls, and things of the like nature, have made ſome call the Preacher high and myſterious; while others, teaching the way of Salvation plainly, by Faith and a good Converſation, have been leſſen'd, with the character of dull, honeſt, and moral Men, fit onely for Catechiſts, and Chriſtians of the loweſt Form. Tickle but their imaginations with conjectural Diſcourſes about the Situation of Paradiſe of old, or Hell now, and you are a ſounder Divine, than he, that onely draws wholſom Concluſions from *Adam*'s prevarication, to caution you againſt ſin of the like nature, or how to avoid thoſe diſmal flames where ever they are. And others have been ſilly and phantaſtick in admiring thoſe who have pratled about the length of the Sword that guarded Paradiſe, or how the Spirits above paſs Eternity away, and ſcorn'd him, who in plain methods chalkt them out the way that will lead
1 Tim.1.4. them to Heaven. The ancient *Gnoſticks*, becauſe they made a mixture of the *Jewiſh* Fables and Genealogies, of their *Lilith* and *Behemoth*, and fetcht in the Stories of the Gods, out of *Orpheus* and *Philiſtion*, (two great Divines in the *Pagan* Religion) into plain Chriſtianity, thought themſelves the moſt knowing Men, of the Secrets of God and Heaven; and wondred how onely Faith upon Jeſus, and keeping of the Commands, could be knowing of God, or Wiſdom from above. The wranglings of the Schools, with their fine diſtinctions and barbarous terms, fitter for Magick than Chriſtianity, by their Diſciples have been priz'd for great

great and precious Truths. And Enthuſiaſtick Raptures, and ſlights, making once the Brain to ſwim, have ſnatcht the hearers beyond themſelves, and then thought them the Dictates of the Spirit, and the Teachings of God; and the more dark and obſcure the Doctrine hath been, the greater illumination it was eſteem'd, and call'd a noon-day Thought, which was a mid-night Dream. Such things as theſe paſs with too many, for ſaving Truths; a great part of Mankind, being ignorant in their Heads, and corrupt in their Practice, eſpous'd to Parties and Intereſts, having Conſtitutions and Paſſions fit for theſe, they readily ſwallow them down. The Apoſtle *confirms the truth of this, telling us, the time will come, when they will not endure ſound Doctrine, but after their own lusts, ſhall they heap to themſelves Teachers, having itching Ears*, caus'd by ſome diſeaſe of Vice within, which is not to be cured by good Phyſick, but onely ſcratch'd and gratifi'd; and if the Food, though wholſom and good, be not to their Palate and Fancy, they complain of hunger and ſtarving. Theſe and many more are the Inſtances of a weak and ſickly nature, craving onely nice and curious things for Spiritual Meat, and kecking at the ſincere Milk of the Word, plain and ſubſtantial Truths, that it may grow thereby. To give therefore a liberty to every Man to run from an eſtabliſhed Church, upon the account of better Edification, which is ſo often and eaſily miſtaken, is to direct Men into temptation and a ſnare, and is dangerous and ſinful; and when once the gap is open, where will, eſpecially the Vulgar, ſtop? May we not add, that this pretence of better Edification is very fit to diſguiſe and colour other Vices? When Controverſies have unhappily riſen, from an unjuſt denial of the Miniſters Rights and

2 Tim. 4. 3.

Dues, or the accidents of civil converſation, they make the Miniſtry, that was ſpiritual and good before, to be call'd dull and mean, and better muſt be ſought elſewhere; while onely Revenge or Covetouſneſs is at the bottom. Wandring Reports, or their own laviſh Tongue, and cenſorious Temper, have call'd ſome Paſtours, Covetous, or Intemperate, or branded them with other Vices, and then cry out, they cannot Edifie in ſuch a Church; and ſo make one fault help out another, and Defamation muſt excuſe their Schiſm.

2. In taking the Opinions of Parties for undoubted Truths eſſential to ſalvation. When men have once wedded a Party, and the Opinions peculiar to it, they magnifie and propagate them, grow furious for their defence, and call them the beſt part of Religion: and if theſe be not abetted and cry'd up, by the Paſtours of our Church, or they differ from them in explications and diſtinctions of them, the way of ſalvation is not taught, they do not improve their Spiritual condition, and therefore is a juſt cauſe of their Separation. Becauſe the Notion or Explication of Faith, and Spirit, Church, and Grace, Juſtification, Regeneration, Converſion, Adoption, and other things of the like nature, are generally different in our Church from thoſe of the Separation, they therefore cry we deſtroy the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel; and inſtead of being Edifi'd, they find themſelves weakned in their Chriſtian Faith. Though 'tis plain to all impartial judgments, that *their ſenſe and interpretation* of them, by natural conſequences leſſen the Grace of the Goſpel, and give ſecurity to lazy Sinners; a ſtrange ſort of Edification! For though our Charity is not ſo narrow, as to think every man a vicious perſon, who is thus miſtaken in his concluſions; yet however, this alters

not

not the nature of these Opinions, and their consequences; and who knows how far men of ill Principles do improve them? Such is the perverse and angry temper of many about their own Opinions, no way necessary to salvation, wherein wise men and good men may differ, which are not stated by Authority, and may not be determin'd till *Elias* come; yet if these be not insisted on, and press'd with vehemency, the great things of the Gospel are omitted, and truths are wanting to their perfection. And if once the People are possess'd with Opinions and Notions, they grow fierce about them, and call them salvation-truths, and run head-long into a Sea of disorder; and tumult, for their defence. The Disciples of the fifth Monarchy, the Pretenders to the Spirit, the Enemies of Childrens Baptism, think themselves wrong'd, and the Gospel hidden, if casually they hear you making Interpretations of the Kingdom of Jesus, the Operations of the Spirit, and that divine Institution, different from their lewd sense. And many Questions, when determin'd, after a great deal of labour, and passion, and expence of time, may improve our Knowledge, but not Faith and a good Life, the onely Edification. The early and best Christians thought themselves mighty Saints, and secure of Heaven, if they onely knew *Jesus and the Resurrection* in their full extent; and the World being such ill Judges about any other Edification, it would be well if they return'd to this good old way, and rest satisfi'd there; lest they take the Inventions of Men, Rhetorick or subtlety, secular interest, or conjectures, for the Pillars of the Temple, to support their Faith; and so upon the score of Edification, break the Peace and Unity of the Church, and Obedience to our Governours, the great things of Religion.

3. In taking ſudden heats and warmth for true Edification. When melting tones, affectionate expreſſions, ſolemn looks and behaviour, paſſion and vehemency, and other Arts, have play'd upon the fancy, and put their conſtitutions into different motions, ſome have thought themſelves ſo ſtrangely Edifi'd, as though it was the impulſe and powerful acting of the Divine Spirit; which many times is no more than a bright or a lowring day can do, acting upon the Animal Spirits; and a Doſe of Phyſick will do the ſame. And if they carry the men no further, improve no virtue in them, they are nothing elſe but downright fleſh and blood. And they are hot and cold, high and low, very changeable and uncertain, according as the humours flow, and as is the bodily temper of the men. Upon this account ſome are melted into Tears, and others are fired into Rage and Zeal; their Spirits, like Tinder, eaſily catching the flame: and theſe have happened in the worſt of Men, ſerving onely the Deſigns of Fury and Hypocriſie; and can no more be called Edification, than the Fire from the Altar, that may conſume the Temple, Zeal. Yet ſuch miſtakes as theſe have been too common; Anger and Revenge have been called Zeal for God; Trade and Intereſt have been Baptized Chriſtianity; Fury and Fumes of the Stomach have been thought the Divine Spirit; ridiculous Looks and unmanly Poſtures have been fanci'd true Acts of Devotion; and when they themſelves were pleas'd, and in the good humour, God was reconcil'd; and when they were dull and heavy, the Spirit was withdrawn: and according as theſe heats and bodily paſſions were ſtirr'd, ſo the Miniſtry was Edifying or unprofitable; pale Cheeks and hollow Looks have been counted

Matth.6.16.

counted signs of Grace, and the Diseases of their body pass'd for the Virtue of their mind. And when a Doctrine hath been so insinuated, as to hit and favour these, they were strangely improv'd, and had obtain'd a good degree in Religion. Many of these may be beginnings, or occasions, leading unto Religion, and may serve some good purposes in men that can manage them well; but to cry up these for Edification, and going on unto perfection, is to betray their People into the power of every Cheat and Impostor, who hath the knack to raise these heats, which pass for reason and conviction of mind; and most commonly are great hindrances to solid and sound reasoning, plain discourses, the true way to Edification, to make firm and lasting impressions upon the mind; while the silly and the weak, who are most subject to these heats and colds, the uncertain motions of their Spirits, are fickle and inconstant, turning round in all Religions; such men being all Sail, are more easily tost about with every wind of Doctrine.

3. Argument to confirm the Answer, is; That pretence of better Edification will cause endless Divisions in the Church. This Question doth suppose, that every man must judge; and so great a part of the World being ignorant and vicious, partial and prejudic'd, false and insincere to themselves and others, they may run from Teacher to Teacher, from *Presbyterian* to *Independent*, from *Independent* to *Anabaptist*, or *Quaker*, and never stop till they come at their Grave, to find out better Edification; *ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth*; ever seeking, and never satisfi'd, till they find the Pattern upon the Mount, or the new *Jerusalem* be come down from above, 2 Tim. 3. 7.

above; till they meet with such a perfect Church, as perhaps will never be here upon earth, till her great Master comes. The ignorant will easily mistake, and who can know the heart and intention of the false and the Hypocrite? And the Governour hath nothing to do here to retrench this liberty, which, as they pretend, is either born with them, or given them by God. At this rate, may not every single person be a Church, leaving all other Christian Societies, fancying that he can better Edifie at home with the workings of his own mind, and some pretended infusions of the Spirit, that he shall better meet with in his privacies and retirements, than in an external and carnal Ministry and Crowd? When once they have torn the Unity of the Church in pieces, and set up their more Edifying Meetings, in comes whole shoals of Vices; Envy and Detraction, Strife and Emulation, Murmurings and Complainings, Fiercenes and Wrath, and a great number of things more, prejudicial to the State of the Kingdom, the interest of Families, the good of Friendship and all civil Conversation; a wonderful Edification, destroying the very Soul of Christianity! The same Principles that divide them from this Church, will crumble them into endless Parties; and every little Chip may call it self a Building, and so destroy all good Government and Discipline, so necessary to propagate and preserve Christianity in the World. And should I live to see that fatal day, when the Government in our Church should be dissolv'd, and liberty given to every man, upon pretence of better Edification, to chuse his Pastour and his Church; so many Mischiefs and Confusions would follow from it, that if there was any regard to common Christianity, or sense of temporal happiness left within their Breast, they

they would too late repent their Schism, (as once in a great degree many of them did) and beg upon their Knees, that the Pale of this Government in Church might be set up again, and they would receive it with all its pretended load of Impositions. This will certainly follow from dividing from the Church; to the laughter of *Rome*, and joy of all the Enemies of our Christian Religion. All this would be avoided, if men were sensible of the hainous nature of Schism, which the Apostles and all the ancient Christians have painted forth in such black colours, though others think our Divisions in the Church are no more, than variety of Companies and Liveries in a City.

4. What great discouragement this is to an honest and truly Christian Ministry. When a Pastour of our Church shall diligently and faithfully, plainly and devoutly unfold the Articles of Faith, and lay down Rules for Practice, which will certainly bring him to Heaven; yet his Flock or Charge, one after another, upon pretence of greener Pastures, greater Knowledge, better Elocution, Delivery, Tone, or the like, to be had elsewhere, shall run from him; will it not cool his Zeal, check his Labours, and affront his Person and Office? This may be done to the painful, as well as idle; to the judicious and learned, as well as imprudent and Ignorant Pastour, where the People shall have liberty of Separation for the sake of Edification. The ill effects of this, have turn'd upon their own Ministers, and new Government; and the most judicious among them have sadly complain'd of it. Formerly they Petition'd, for a painful and preaching Ministry, but this pretence of better Edification gives denial to their own request; such Discouragements as

these

these happening severely sometimes to the best of Pastours, as well as the worst. And they have no cure for this, having put a power into the Peoples hands which they cannot recal; for neither King, Parliament, Bishop, or Pastour, can tell them what is Edification so well as themselves. And are the Pastours of the Church to be so treated and trifled with, who derive their Offices and Authority from God to Command and Perswade, to Rebuke and Exhort, and have the Charge of Souls committed to them, for fancies, peevishness and humour, to be scorn'd and discountenanc'd, and have their Ministry rendred useless, and the Sheep to govern the Shepherd? But what if our Pastour be idle or remiss in his Duty, or corrupt in his Faith, and teacheth Errour instead of sound Doctrine, and we have no means of Edification? what must we do? must we take in Poyson for Food? or not be fed at all? To be sure, you must not run into Schismatical Separation; 'tis more tolerable to go to other Congregations of our Communion; that may be irregular, but 'tis not Schismatical: but thanks be to God, we have a Government, which upon a just and modest Complaint, will quicken the lazy and negligent, correct the Heretical Pastour, and restore to you true Edification.

That this Discourse may prevail upon such who make this Question, I desire to recommend these two following things, which are very reasonable, to their consideration.

1. That if they fancy any Defects in our Government, they should not hence conclude, that they have not sufficient Edification in the Church to save their Souls. If upon a nice search and critical enquiry, they think,

think they have found ſome little Flaws and Defects, improper Phraſes, doubtful Senſes, and ſome ſmall Omiſſions in the matter of our Prayers and Diſcipline, yet let them not conclude, that theſe can weigh in the ballance againſt the black ſin of Schiſm and Separation, and all its ſad Conſequences, which is excus'd by nothing elſe but terms of Communion plainly ſinful. Have not Divine Services been accepted, which were leſs perfect, and came not up to their rule? as is plain in *Hezekiah's* Paſſover, which was not to the *Purification of the Sanctuary*, yet the good King's Prayer, and *the neceſſity* of the time, prevail'd with God *to heal the People*, that is, to repute them clean and well prepar'd, and their Sacrifice and Devotion good. 2 Chron. 30. 18, 19, 20. Is there no Reverence to be paid to the Pious Authors of our Service and Reformation, but to tell them, they muſt divide from them, were they now living? for they cannot Edifie under that Religion and Government for which they dy'd. Is there, or will there ever be any Government in the Church, ſo well fram'd and built, but ſome curious Surveyor can ſpy out ſome diſproportion or ill ſhape, eſpecially if aſſiſted by ill Nature, Emulation, the Spirit of Pride and Contention, which is ever quick-ſighted abroad, and blind at home? the difficulty of knowing what is utmoſt perfection, and abſolute purity of Adminiſtrations, (which, till attain'd, theſe Men think they are not to reſt in any Church) ſhould make them judge candidly, interpret fairly, and comply with every thing, that is not ſinful, to preſerve Peace and Love. When Men in the *Engliſh* Church are plainly taught to believe well, to live well, and to dye well, and have good and proper Offices to ſerve

theſe great purpoſes, in order to their Salvation, what can they deſire more? To be better, or more ſav'd, we know not what it means. To leave ſuch a Communion, upon ſuch an account, proceeds from peeviſhneſs, uncharitableneſs, or ſome ill Principle; and is downright Schiſm, if ever there was Schiſm in the World. Bring but an honeſt, ſincere and teachable mind, and it will find improvement and advantage in Offices and Adminiſtrations fuller of ſpots and blemiſhes far than they can pretend to find in the *Engliſh* Church; but if the mind be byaſſed by a Party, or corrupted by Deſigns, if its Palate be vitiated, the beſt Food is coarſe and inſipid to it.

2. Let Edification be plac'd in the ſubſtantial things of Religion. Some revolt from our Church for things wherein the Paſtour is ſolely concern'd, and others for things of decency, and indifferency; but theſe things do not concern the Caſe of Edification. That a right Faith, and an honeſt Converſation, are not taught in our Church, is onely a ſcandal caſt upon her, to plead for their unjuſt Separation. For after ſhe hath plainly and diſtinctly taught the Articles of Faith, (as was prov'd before) with the ſame Spirit and Zeal ſhe commands and preſſes Juſtice, Humility, Mercy, and every Virtue that is neceſſary to a true Chriſtian Life, and both under the Penalty of Eternal Damnation: theſe, and theſe alone, do truly Edifie the Souls of Men; as is plain, if we conſider, that our Prayers and Sacraments, our Churches Ceremonies and Diſcipline, and all other parts in Religion, are in order to, and miniſter unto Faith their head,

head; that works by love: and the nearer these approach unto, and the greater service they do to this design, the greater degree they have in Religion, and more value is set upon them. This is that Religion which our first Parent was of in his Paradise and innocency; *Noah* and his Posterity in their Precepts; and Pious Men in different Countries before the Law of *Moses* thus serv'd God. And the scope and aim of the *Jewish* Law, with its Temple and Utensils, its Figures and Ceremonies, was to discipline and teach Men thus to be good, with allowance to the Nature of that People, and the Times they liv'd in. And the best and most knowing *Pagans* thought such a Religion as this would most please God; who therefore in some measure did accept it, and reward it with greater Discoveries, as is plain in *Cornelius*, the Queen of *Candaces* Treasurer, and others, who having not the Law, were a Law unto themselves. In such things as these, the Kingdom of our Messias was to consist; not in Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. Such a Religion as this, Edifies in so great a degree, that 'tis the onely Condition and Qualification for the upper World; where (though other great Parts of Religion shall dye with us) Righteousness, Gratitude, Love of God, and glorified Beings, and such like Virtues, are of an Eternal Nature, shall be Ingredients of our Happiness, and shall live with us for ever. What can be justly requir'd in Religion, to improve Mens Souls, that is not found in this? Is it to recover the Nature of Man now defac'd? Righ-

Acts 8. 27. Acts 10. 4.

Rom. 14. 17.

teousneſs and Goodneſs, proceeding from Faith, their root, will make us truly good. Is it to give us a clearer Knowledge and worthy Conceptions of God? ſuch a practical Religion as this, beſt prepares for greater knowledge, and in
1 Joh. 2. 4. Scripture-ſence is knowing of him. Is it Religion to love God? the love of God conſiſts in obedience to his Precepts, ſubmiſſion to his Will, and reſignation to his Providence; otherwiſe 'tis flattery and fondneſs. Is it the deſign of Religion to bleſs Mankind here, and edifie them in their different relations? ſuch a Religion as this in our Church will do all that, and make the World a Paradiſe once more. This will give us the beſt character to judge by, whether we ſhall be ſav'd or no, being the perfection of all other marks and ſigns of our aſſurance of Life and Glory. When we are ſo Edifi'd and Religious, we are certain, that we are juſtifi'd and adopted, accepted and treated like the Sons of God; that we are in Chriſt, and have our wedding-Garments on, our proper qualifications for the ſtate of Heaven. Such an honeſt Principle as this, makes our Prayers to be heard, our Devotions to be regarded, our Hopes to be ſtrengthened. This is the great intention of Chriſtianity, the Holy of Holys of our Temple, and all Religion. Such a Religion as this being ſo ſtrongly enjoyn'd and zealouſly taught in our Church, no ways diſguis'd by a dreſs of Phraſes, or corrupted into ſoft and luſhious ſences, we need not complain for want of the means of Grace and Edification; we need not croſs the Seas, or run into private corners for it; 'tis nigh us,

even

even at our Doors; in the eſtabliſh'd Government of the Church of *England*. Some uſe to ſay, that brown Bread and the Goſpel was very good Fare; but now they are grown as nice and delicate about Religion and Edification, as about Sawces and Dreſſes. Thanks be to God, 'tis a knowing Age, I wiſh it was as good. The Corruption of it doth not ariſe for want of Knowledge and Information; if it doth, the Cure is near, let them value that Church and Government that hath all things in it ſufficient to Mens Salvation. Let them not think ſo light of Schiſm, and ſpeaking evil of the Rule and Diſcipline in our Church, ſo fit and neceſſary to the preſervation of Chriſtianity; let them not cry up other *Pauls* and *Apollos's*; any other Teachers making Diviſions among us, than this Church hath allowed for their Edification; which is ſo far from Spiritual Edification, that it calls ſuch Men *Carnal*. For the deſire of any other Nouriſhment, *beſide ſuch* plain Food, is Spiritual *Pride and Wantonneſs*; and they pamper their Fancies, while they ſtarve their Judgments. Let us therefore ſtick to ſuch a manly Religion, one great part of which is, to preſerve Obedience, Peace, and Order; and ſay of our Church, that teacheth it, as the Diſciples of its Author; *Thou art he, and we ſeek for no other: whither ſhall we go? thou haſt the Words of Eternal Life.* She hath all things in her that are neceſſary *for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Miniſtry, for the Edifying of the Body; till we all come in the Unity of the Faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son.*

1 Cor. 3. 4.

Epheſ. 4. 12, 13.

Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the ſtature of the fulneſs of Chriſt. That ſuch a Religion as this in our Church is pleaſing both to God and Man, we have the Teſtimony of an Apoſtle: *He that in theſe things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God, and approv'd of Men.*

Rom. 14. 18.

FINIS.

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